

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6131

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, FR

SUBJECT: THE SOCIALISTS AND THE ARMY

SUMMARY: SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) HELD JOINT MEETING OF ITS SEVERAL MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS DECEMBER 13-14. MOST NOTABLE RESULTS INVOLVING US INTERESTS WERE ATTACKS BY SEVERAL SPEAKERS ON NATO STANDARDIZATION AND CONTINUING ACCUSATIONS THAT GOF WANTS TO TAKE FRANCE BACK INTO NATO. INTERNAL ITEMS OF INTEREST INCLUDE PS FEARS OF BEING OUTFLANKED -- TO BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT -- BY THE COMMUNISTS (PCF) AND OBVIOUS PS CONFUSION AND DISUNITY OVER ATTITUDE TO TAKE TOWARDS MILITARY REFORM, SOLDIER UNREST AND UNION ORGANIZING IN THE ARMED FORCES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONVENTION: PS SPONSORED JOINT MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL OF ITS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS. THESE INCLUDE ORGANIZATION OF DRAFTEES, CONVENTION OF OFFICERS FOR A NEW ARMY AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS' CONVENTION, AS WELL AS SEVERAL OTHER GROUPS WHICH PRIMARILY EXIST ON PAPER. ATTENDANCE AT THE OPEN SESSION ON SUNDAY WAS LIGHT, WITH SOME 50 PERSONS REPRESENTING VARIOUS OF THESE GROUPS LISTENING TO SPEECHES BY PS NATIONAL SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ROBERT PONTILLON, PS' LEFT-WING LEADER JEAN-PIERRE CHEVENEMENT (CERES) AND SEVERAL OTHER DEPUTIES. DECEMBER 13 SESSION HAD GREATER PARTICIPATION LARGELY BECAUSE IT WAS HELD BEHIND CLOSED DOORS; APPROXIMATELY A HUNDRED REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS DRAFTEE ORGANIZATIONS DISCUSSED THEIR PROBLEMS, EXTREMIST ACTION IN THE ARMED FORCES AND POSSIBLE TACTICS OPEN TO THE PS. THE DECEMBER 13TH DISCUSSION WAS TACTICAL, RESPONSIBLE AND TOOK LITTLE NOTE OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL DEBATE ON THE DEMOBILIZATION OF THE ARMED FOR(PARIS 32233 AND IR 6-832-0531-75).

2. NATO STANDARDIZATION: IN DISCUSSING GOF'S LACK OF DETAILED EXPLANATION OF MILITARY BUDGET AS WELL AS GOF'S EVIDENT DESIRE TO PRESENT ONLY SHORT-TERM (ONE YEAR) MILITARY BUDGET TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SEVERAL FIGURES FROM BOTH CERES AND MAIN BODY OF PS ATTACKED THIS TACTIC AS OBFUSCATION AND A "PRELUDE TO STANDARDI-
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ZATION". BUILDING ON THE THEME, CHEVENEMENT ARGUED THAT QUESTION OF STANDARDIZATION WILL HAVE TO BE SETTLED BEFORE RATIONAL ALLOCATION OF FRENCH MILITARY BUDGET TO TRAINING AND MANPOWER CATEGORIES CAN BE MADE. WHILE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MORE MONEY FOR TRAINING AND TROOP FACILITIES, CHEVENEMENT MADE CLEAR HIS OPPOSITION TO ANY CHANGES IN BUDGET WHICH MIGHT BE BASED ON A GOF DECISION TO AGREE TO GREATER STARDARDIZATION. IN PRIVATE CONVER-

SATION WITH EMBOFF, SEVERAL MAJORITY LEADERS WERE EVEN MORE VEHEMENT ON THE ISSUE THAN CHEVENEMENT, ALTHOUGH THEY DID NOT STATE THEIR VIEWS PUBLICLY.

3. COMMENT ON STANDARDIZATION: THERE IS RELATIVELY WIDE CONSENSUS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THAT FRANCE SHOULD NOT GIVE UP AN INDEPENDENT ARMS PRODUCTION CAPABILITY. EVEN MORE CONSENSUS EXISTS ON CONTINUING INDEPENDENT FRENCH R & D CAPABILITY. THE PS CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT IT HAS AN EXPLOITABLE ISSUE CAPABLE OF TUGGING AT A LOT OF NATIONALISTIC HEARTSTRINGS WHEN IT ATTACKS STANDARDIZATION, AND IT MAY WELL BE THAT THEY ARE RIGHT. CHEVENEMENT'S REMARKS WERE VERY CLOSE TO THOSE RECENTLY MADE BY MICHEL DEBRE, UDR DEPUTY AND FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER, AS WELL AS TO PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT RECENTLY ISSUED BY ROBERT BALLANGER, HEAD OF THE PCF PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. WHILE THE PS MAJORITY IS NOT CURRENTLY GIVING ANY

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IMPORTANT PUBLIC BACKING TO THE ATTACKS, WE BELIEVE THAT
MITTERRAND WILL SHORTLY TAKE ON THE ISSUE IN LANGUAGE
WE WILL NOT FIND HELPFUL.

4. THE EUROPEAN OPTION: PS PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE
"EUROPEAN OPTION" RECENTLY PROPOSED BY EUROGROUP, HAS
NOT YET BEGUN. IF CERTAIN PS LEADERS (HERNU, JEAN-PIERRE
COT) SEEM INITIALLY FAVORABLE TO IT, THEIR REACTIONS ARE
SOMEWHAT MUTED. HERNU' THE PS LEADER MOST FAVORABLE TO
SOME FORM OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION, HAS NOT YET SECURED
MITTERRAND'S BLESSING FOR A PUBLIC STATEMENT. IN ANY
EVENT, THE SUBJECT WAS CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE AT THE
CONVENTION.

5. CRITIQUES OF THE GOF'S VIEW OF NATO: PONTILLON AND
CHEVENEMENT DISAGREED SHARPLY OVER WHERE FRENCH STRATE-
GIC INTERESTS LIE. AFTER PONTILLON HAD BUILT A MAJOR
PORTION OF HIS SPEECH AROUND THE THEME OF "NO SATISFAC-
TORY BALANCE OF POWER FOR FRANCE WITHOUT THE US", CHEVE-
NEMENT REPLIED THAT THERE IS "NO EQUILIBRIUM WITHOUT
THE SOVIET UNION". THE INCIDENT WAS REVELATORY --
PONTILLON, ALONG WITH PS DEFENSE SPECIALIST CHARLES
HERNU, SPENT MUCH OF DECEMBER 14 ARGUING THAT FRANCE'S
FUTURE WAS INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO NATO AS LONG AS THE
WARSAW PACT ENDURES' WHILE CHEVENEMENT AND SOME OF THE
OFFICERS PRESENT INSISTED ON A MORE "EQUILIBRATED"

SOLUTION.

6. THE "LITTLE COMRADES": STRANGELY ABSENT FROM THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION WAS ANY MENTION OF THE PCF'S ROLE IN THE RECENT DIFFICULTIES IN THE ARMED SERVICES. ALL FACTIONS PRESENT WERE QUITE WILLING TO PRIVATELY DENOUNCE THE PCF AS SEEKING AT ONCE TO CAPITALIZE ON EXISTING COMPLAINTS WITHIN THE ARMY AND TO PUBLICLY TAKE STANDS WHICH THE PS QUALIFIES AS "ULTRA-GAULLIST". SUCH CRITICISMS WERE, HOWEVER, NOT MADE IN THE PLENARY SESSIONS OR IN FRONT OF THE PRESS. SEVERAL RANKING OFFICERS EXPRESSED WHAT THEY CALLED "TACTICAL ADMIRATION" FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PCF'S RECENT MANEUVERS' WHICH HAVE ENABLED THE COMMUNISTS TO APPEAR RESPONSIBLE IN THEIR DENUNCIATIONS OF UNION ORGANIZING IN THE ARMED FORCES AT A TIME WHEN "EVEN THE DUMBEST PRIVATE" KNOWS THAT PCF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES ARE FLIRTING WITH THE UNION ORGANIZERS.

7. THE SOLDIERS: MILITARY MEN PRESENT AT THE CONVENTION WERE CAUTIOUS, RESPONSIBLE AND CAREFUL IN THEIR STATEMENTS. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT BY THEIR MERE PRESENCE THEY HOPED TO GIVE FURTHER LEGITIMACY TO WHAT THEY VIEW AS A HEALTHY CONCERN ON THE PART OF THE PS WITH THE IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING THE ARMED FORCES. AT LEAST TWO SOURCES TOLD EMBOFFS OVER THE WEEKEND THAT A NUMBER OF SENIOR FRENCH GENERALS HAD RECENTLY WRITTEN TO MITTERRAND TO ASSURE HIM THAT THE ARMY HIERARCHY DOES NOT SHARE THE GOF VIEW THAT THE PS IS ANTI-MILITARIST AND UNPATRIOTIC. MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MEETING SEEMED MOST CONCERNED WITH GETTING A NATIONAL DEBATE STARTED ON THE PROBLEMS OF TRAINING, RESERVE TRAINING AND LOGISTICS. THEY SEEMED UNCOMFORTABLE WITH CONTINUING DEBATES ON IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES.

8. COMMENT: THE ONLY HARD RESULT TO COME OUT OF THE MEETING IS YET ANOTHER EXPRESSION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE REAL PROBLEMFACING THE ARMED SERVICES IN FRANCE ARE BEING NEGLECTED BY THE CURRENT DEBATE OVER UNIONIZATION. THE REAL DEFENSE EXPERTS IN THE PS -- HERNU, CHEVENEMENT, DUROURE (PS DEPUTY) -- APPEAR TO RESENT HAVING TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON THE PROBLEMS WHICH THE IDEOLOGUES HAVE RAISED. THAT DOESN'T PREVENT THEM FROM FIGHTING A HARD IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE IN THE DEFENSE OF THEIR POSITIONS, BUT IT DOES IMPLY THAT THEY ARE NOT HAPPY WITH IT. AS AN EXERCISE IN THE COMMUNICATION OF MILITARY CONCERNS TO THE POLITICALS OF THE PS, THE CONVENTION ADDED NOTHING NEW TO WHAT WAS ALREADY KNOWN BY ALL SIDES.
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